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# URBANIZATION IN THAILAND

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## I. The concept of a city or a municipality in Thailand

The area which may be considered as an urban area is the area which the Municipal Government Act defined as a municipality. According to the present law, there are three kinds of municipalities, which are:-

### (a) City Municipality

City Municipality is the area which has population excess of 50,000 and the average density of population must be not less than 3,000 per $km^2$. At the same time it must have adequate revenues for compulsory functions prescribed by law.

At present, we have three city municipalities in Thailand, which are Bangkok, the capital, Dhonburi, the twin city of Bangkok on the other side of Chaophaya River and Chiengmai, the former capital of the Northern part of the country.

Statistic data showing the increasing in population may be seen as follows:

Population and its Growth (City-Municipalities)

| Municipalities | Municipal population | | | | | | + Increase - Decrease |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1949 | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 | |
| Bangkok | 710,432 | 757,686 | 799,639 | 845,374 | 924,990 | 971,570 | + 46,580 |
| Dhonburi | 194,185 | 205,990 | 217,254 | 228,454 | 246,668 | 259,833 | + 13,165 |
| Chiengmai | 39,691 | 41,394 | 43,103 | 45,590 | 49,267 | 52,899 | + 3,632 |

/(b) Town

(b) Town Municipality

Town Municipality is the place where the Provincial Governor office is located or which the population exceeds 10,000 and the average density of population is not less than 3,000 per $km^2$. At the same time, it must have adequate revenues for compulsory functions prescribed by law.

All over the country we have 82 town municipalities "Cholburi" Town-Municipalities composed of the greatest number of population (34,809 inhabitants). "Krabi" Town-Municipality has the smallest amount of population (2,006 inhabitants).

(c) Township Municipality

Unlike City and Town-Municipalities, there are no specific numbers of population and the density of which prescribed by law, But usually they are the areas which are the centres for commercial purposes and are likely to become Town municipalities soon.

At present, we have 32 Township Municipalities.

According to the Municipal statistics, it is indicated that from the year 1953 - 1954 the increasing of the population within all municipalities is 84,339 inhabitants.

Apart from three kinds of municipalities as stated, we also have Sanitary Districts. These are usually market places which are likely to become municipalities. A Sanitary District is established by the Proclamation of the Ministry of Interior prescribing its name and area. Its concepts are that:-

(i) It is not suitable for becoming a municipality yet.

(ii) It is the primary school for the people to learn more about self-government by practice under the guidance and support of the Government.

(iii) Well-developed Sanitary District will be recognized as a Municipality by a Royal Decree, considering the following factors:-

/- Number of

- Number of population.
- Income
- Needs of the people.
- Self-responsibility.

Sanitary Districts were organized only two or three years ago. At present we have 71 Sanitary Districts.

## II. Problems and the causes of urbanization

### 1. Types of people who move from rural area to urban area

(a) People who leave rural area definitely and settle permanently in cities or towns.

(b) People who leave rural area temporarily, such as at the end of rice-growing season. After doing some works in cities or towns for a few months, they return to rural area at the next rice-growing season.

### 2. Causes of leaving rural area to live in urban area

(a) Sometimes some rural area becomes infertile and people who live there cannot get enough income to support themselves and families so they leave rural area definitely to settle in cities or towns.

(b) For some people, rural area cannot give them enough work to do at certain season, so they leave home temporarily to do some casual work.

(c) Some people are attracted by modern amenities which they have seen in cities and towns. For example, soldiers who are being sent to be trained in camps near cities and towns, when they are demolished, they do not want to return home and try to hang on in towns by doing some casual work until they can settle themselves properly.

(d) Some people come to live in towns because they are persuaded by labour agencies of certain factories or workshops which are mainly concentrated in urban areas.

/3. Problems

3. Problems of urban area

Most of the people who move into towns are unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Most of them work independently as tricycle drivers of hawkers. Some of them find work in factories and workshops and quite a number of them take the job like domestic servants and other casual work. Economically, though they can find money more easily in towns than in rural areas, it is very difficult to find enough money to support themselves and families. It takes quite a time before they can settle down properly.

On social and cultural side, the people who come to live in towns lose quite a lot of family grip which is usually more prominent in rural areas. Many of them have adopted a rather loose behavior and some of them have caused certain disturbances. Their sons might also become juvenile delinquencies. Their way of living is much lower than in rural area. They might have to live in shabby huts or overcrowded rooms in small lanes.

Because cities and towns are usually grown up without proper town planning, even at present we have Town Planning Act, it is very difficult to deal with things which have already built, such as narrow streets, slums.

III. The Governmental agencies which are dealing with problems of urbanization

(1) Economic Problems

(a) Ministry of Economic Affairs. This Ministry is dealing with problems like finding markets for products or foods for ever-growing population in town. At the same time they have to try to stop profiteering in towns.

(b) Ministry of Agriculture. To stop people leaving rural area, it is a duty of the Ministry of Agriculture to promote development of agriculture in rural area such as a system of irrigation, provision of better seeds.

/(c) Ministry

(c) Ministry of Industry. Industrial location in urban area is specified by this Ministry.

(d) Ministry of Interior. In co-ordinating all the above mentioned work and giving effects to them are largely the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior.

(2) Social and Cultural Problems

Social and cultural problems are mainly dealt with by the Ministry of Interior especially by Public Welfare Department. For the control of Municipalities is done by the Department of Interior. There are also Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education who deal with the problems in their particular field.

(3) Physical Problem

Within the Ministry of Interior, there is also the Department of Public Works. This Department is dealing with town planning. The plans of every town must be approved by this Department.

IV. The major urban problem

The major urban problem now is the overcrowded of population in some urban areas, especially in Bangkok. People come from various rural areas to find work in the capital. Many of them have to live on a rather lowly paid wage and live in slum section of the cities. In consequence, they have caused many problems not unlike that of cities of other countries, such as:-

(1) Provision of education for both children and adult especially the lack of sufficient number of school buildings and teachers.

(2) Problem of young persons do not use their time properly and trend to be mischievous.

(3) The problem of finding sufficient and proper places to live in for ever-growing population in cities and towns.